



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
St. Louis District®

Press Release

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Contact: Nicole Dalrymple
314-331-8068

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1222 Spruce Street, St. Louis, Missouri 63103-2833

Locks 27 Auxiliary Chamber Closed for Repairs

Granite City, IL – Today the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers closed the 600-foot auxiliary lock chamber at Locks 27. The closure will last until December 13 and is necessary to replace lift gate machinery and counter weights, which are at an unacceptable level of risk for failure. The main lock will remain open during the closure.

After the new year, similar work will take place on the 1,200-foot main lock chamber, which will be closed from January 3 to March 1. During this closure the 600-foot auxiliary lock will remain open; however, due to the lock's smaller size, some tows will be required to make double cuts or special lockages. These lockages require the tow be 'cut' in half and go through the lock chamber in two sections, doubling the time it takes to transit the lock chamber.

"We have been working closely with the River Industry Action Committee (RIAC) to minimize impacts to the navigation industry from the closure," said Peg O'Bryan, Chief of the St. Louis District's Operations Division. "This work is critical and will ensure that the lock continues to provide reliable service into the future while minimizing the possibility of unscheduled closures."

Closing the smaller lock first allows the 1,200-foot lock chamber to remain open during the heavier traffic periods of fall and early winter when the grain harvest is being transported down the Mississippi River to Louisiana ports. A 15-barge tow, what is normally seen on the upper river, can carry 22,500 tons of cargo or 787,500 bushels of grain. Locks 27 is the busiest lock on the Upper Mississippi River, annually locking through over 70 million tons of commodities (28 million in grain shipments) and acting as the access point to the Upper Mississippi River as well as the Illinois River.

Closing locks for scheduled maintenance requires balancing the needs of waterborne commerce with the type of work that needs to be accomplished. Locks 24 (Clarksville, Mo.) and 25 (Winfield, Mo.) have undergone winter closures as part of major rehabilitation, the last being the winter of 2003-2004 at Locks 24. While winter is not the ideal time for this type of work it is the best time for the navigation industry because it corresponds with the annual closure of the upper river in Minnesota.

"We are committed to completing this closure within the scheduled dates," O'Bryan said. "The work will be done as quickly as possible but doing the job correctly and safely is our first objective. We've got a great contractor onboard who has a strong safety record and history of completing jobs on schedule."

Midwest Foundation Corporation of Tremont, Ill., is executing the \$13.46 million contract.

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Editor's Note: Media wishing to visit Locks 27 during the closure are asked to coordinate their visit through the Public Affairs Office. There will be no unescorted access to the work scene. The Public Affairs Office can be reached at 314-331-8068/8095.